



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Home Affairs**

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# **Department of Home Affairs submission to the Inquiry into the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty**

**Joint Standing Committee on Treaties**  
January 2025

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## Introduction

The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) and the Australian Border Force (ABF) welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (the Committee's) Inquiry into the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty (DSC Treaty).

## Connection to Home Affairs and the ABF

The DSC Treaty establishes a framework that makes it easier for UK and Australian armed forces to operate together in each other's countries. The framework deals with a range of matters including the movement of personnel, materiel and other effects into, within and from the territory of the receiving state.

The Agreement facilitates free rates of customs duty for certain imported goods for UK Visiting Forces, civilian personnel accompanying the Visiting Force and their dependents.

Australia has established conditions of entry and departure for visiting members of the UK Defence Force under previous Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA). Article 4 of Annex 1 of the DSC Treaty: Status of Forces extends these entry and departure conditions to a Civilian Component and Dependents in a manner that is consistent with the principles of Australia's universal visa system.

Home Affairs and the ABF are well positioned to support the relevant elements of the treaty in an efficient and judicious manner.

## Benefits to Home Affairs and the ABF

Home Affairs and the ABF support the DSC Treaty. The UK is a key partner and we welcome initiatives that strengthen our relationship and support international rules based orders that have contributed to 80 years of global security and prosperity.

While predominantly focused on defence cooperation, it is noted that within Article 1, the broad scope of the DSC Treaty includes information exchange on security issues. The UK and its border agencies, UK Border Force and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), are key bilateral partners of the ABF on border security matters including illicit drugs, illicit tobacco, irregular migration, counter proliferation and supply chain strengthening and enhancement. The UK is also a key partner of the ABF in multilateral forums including the Border 5 and World Customs Organization where we work closely in aligning our interests to improve global border security capabilities. While the ABF do not envisage utilising the DSC Treaty for information exchange purposes, when considered from a whole of government perspective, the agreement is consistent with the ABF's objectives to share security information with our partners across our broad customs, migration and coast guard remits.

The DSC Treaty's National Interest Analysis (NIA) assessment stresses the importance of taking binding treaty action to signify Australia's commitment to bilateral cooperation. This assessment is consistent with the intent underpinning the Australia/UK treaty level Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA) currently being negotiated between the ABF and HMRC which similarly seeks to consolidate a range of less-than-treaty status agreements with the UK on border security matters.

The ABF welcomes the DSC Treaty's implementation which together with our own CMAA, collectively signals Australia's intent to work collaboratively with likeminded partners.

Article 6 of the DSC Treaty deals with the transfer of defence equipment and services between Australia and the UK. The ABF maintain robust import/export mechanisms to support the transfer of defence equipment including measures to comply with Australia's counter proliferation obligations. The ABF is well positioned to support these elements of the treaty in an efficient and judicious manner.

## Conclusion

Home Affairs and the ABF thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission and look forward to its report.